



AMERICAN GUILD OF ORGANISTS

## Chapter Leadership News

June 2022

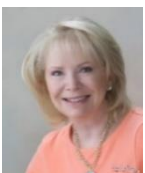
### *Less Is More*

Dear Chapter Leaders,

In April I had the pleasure of joining regional councillors and members of the National Council in a discussion that focused on how we can streamline volunteer work and expectations, as many chapter leaders now have less time to perform their duties. I have heard from many of you who are facing serious challenges finding candidates to serve as chapter officers and are terribly concerned about presenting an incomplete slate of nominees for elections. As a reminder, AGO bylaws require that a chapter have a dean, a treasurer, and a secretary—that's it. Is it helpful to have someone to oversee welcoming new members, and someone focused on recruitment and strengthening member engagement? Yes, that's valuable, but it's not essential. I recently met with a group of officers who were considering postponing chapter elections because they didn't have a sub-dean on their slate. I advised them not to do this, but to consider paring down the number of monthly programs for the upcoming year. In our discussion, we established that meeting together in social settings is as important as attending workshops, recitals, organ crawls, etc. These officers also realized that they already had a built-in support team in their **members at large**, who could each help with coordinating events so that the responsibility for planning does not fall on a sole person. Many of you have large classes of members at large. Give them some membership and programming duties, with specific instructions about what needs to be done. This will help you implement a **leadership pipeline**, so that when the next elections come around, these board members will be prepared to serve in other key officer positions. When planning your year of programs, please consider opportunities for collaboration with other chapters and arts organizations (in person or virtually), as well as participating in annual events that already occur in your area. Keep it simple, manage your expectations, and don't bite off more than you can chew. Your members can still enjoy rewarding experiences, and you will be less stressed. *Less is more.*

This issue of **Chapter Leadership News** will cover the following:

- ✓ Leadership Profile: Donna Elkin, Dean, Williamsport Chapter
- ✓ Year of the Young Organist: Keeping Your New Members Engaged
- ✓ Chapter Anniversaries, Mergers, and Visits
- ✓ New Date: Chapter Town Hall Meeting, Monday, June 6
- ✓ June 30 Deadline to Update Your New Officer Roster in ONCARD
- ✓ Programs in a Box
- ✓ Fox Valley Chapter's Policy Regarding Subsidy for Their Dean to Attend AGO Conventions



Elizabeth George, CMM  
Chief Membership Officer  
American Guild of Organists

## Profile of the Month: Donna Elkin, Dean, Williamsport (Pa.) Chapter

### **What's sitting on my**

**desk right now:** A tall pile of choir music to be filed, a schedule for the summer to be finalized, and work to do on the AGO calendar of events for next year. Also, a dog behaviorist course to be finished, family history to be written and published, and pops concert percussion parts to practice.

**If I weren't doing this,** I'd be traveling to Spain to see family or visiting with the rest of them in Pennsylvania, playing games with my two poodles, or maybe just floating in the pool.

### **When I'm not at work:**

Being retired means always being at work, because you choose the work you like to do.

**The best advice I ever got:** "Have faith. Don't live in fear. Enjoy life." "Fear is how you lose your life . . . a little bit at a time. . . . What we give to fear, we take away from . . . faith." —Mitch Albom

### **What keeps me motivated serving as chapter dean:**

Great people who will take over this job someday, and the fun we have together.



**The Year of the Young Organist  
Chapter Recruitment Contest  
Win \$1000 for your chapter!**

Over the past 12 months we have created monthly recruitment tips to grow your chapter's young organist membership: <https://www.agohq.org/year-of-the-young-organist-recruitment-contest-2/>.

During the business meeting at the National Convention in Seattle, we will be announcing the winners.

**Currently in the lead:**

**Small Chapter:** Hong Kong, with a net growth of 10 new young organists.

**Medium Chapter:** Denver Rocky Mountain, with a net growth of 16 new young organists.

**Large Chapter:** Los Angeles, with a net growth of 14 new young organists.

**TIP #12—and probably one of the most important:  
You've got them—now how do you *keep* them?**

- ✓ Many young organists may be heading off to college. Create a **care package** or **memory book** for them that might include personal good-luck notes from chapter members, a special piece of music, photos from a recital, or a snapshot from a Zoom meeting.
- ✓ Honor them at your annual dinner, picnic, or get-together.
- ✓ Interview them for an upcoming newsletter, asking what this year has meant to them.
- ✓ Make sure that you have updated contact information for them, so that if they move from the area you can stay connected to them.

Drumroll, please! At the beginning of last July, I had a personal goal that we would recruit 1,000 new young organist members by June 30, 2022. We will achieve that goal! I want to thank each of you for your focus on recruitment, and for all that you have done to make our new young organist members feel welcomed and valued. Applause, applause!

***CONGRATULATIONS!***



Matthew Doran, Vashni Seitzer, and Claire DeCusati each won a free pair of organ shoes from the raffle that we held during **Volunteer Recognition Week!**

## Chapter Anniversaries, Visits, and Mergers



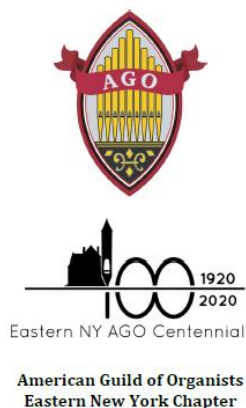
### Happy 75th Anniversary to the Springfield (Mass.) Chapter

On April 22 I had the pleasure of attending the Springfield chapter's 75th-anniversary celebration, which was postponed last year due to COVID. We had presented the certificate on a Zoom meeting, but this was the first time that chapter members could get together to celebrate in person!

The celebration took place at the Cathedral of St. Michael and featured Monica Czausz Berney, who recently was married at the cathedral and is a beloved Springfield chapter young organist. Monica's program, titled **Fanciful and Divine**, included works by Kapustin, Brahms, Bach, and Demessieux, as well as the Scherzo from Tchaikovsky's "Pathétique" Symphony.

### A Centennial Celebration

Congratulations to the Eastern New York chapter for their 100th anniversary!



On April 30, the chapter held a very special celebration that included a recital featuring Joey Fala. Phylcia Ross, manager of member engagement and chapter support, attended the event and presented a certificate to Susan Lohnas, chapter dean, honoring this special milestone.





## Chapter Visits

During my New England road trip, I also had the opportunity to meet with officers from the Cape Cod and the Islands chapter: Deborah Gemma, dean; John Dulina, treasurer; and Cheryl Duerr and Charlene Higbe,

members at large. What is extraordinary about this chapter is that their membership of 60 spans not only all of Cape Cod, but Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard, as well. We discussed scaling down some of their programs for the upcoming year and identifying other arts organizations that they could partner with. As they are one of the chapters that will not have a sub-dean, everyone agreed that they could each be responsible for overseeing a specific program. Kudos for their enthusiasm and determination, and for showing that, by working as a team, much can be accomplished!



I also had the pleasure of meeting with Louise Munding, past dean of the Boston chapter and current director of the AGO's Committee on New Music, and Claire DeCusati, current Boston chapter registrar. Both have served in just about every officer capacity for the chapter. We are so grateful to have the leadership of these two wonderfully talented women, who continue to share their expertise with the AGO!



### The American Guild of Organists Jacksonville, FL Chapter



I was delighted to be invited to Jacksonville's year-end dinner, which took place on May 10. This was the first time that the chapter had met in person, and it was so moving to see members who had not seen one another for some time greet one another. I want to thank Brandon Smith, dean; Tony Cruz, sub-dean; Duane Carter, secretary; and Ray McDonald; treasurer, for their wonderful hospitality and for welcoming me so warmly. Plans are already underway for the chapter's next season.

## Chapter Mergers: New Hampshire and Monadnock

The New Hampshire and Monadnock chapters have had several discussions over the past few months regarding a possible merger. Essentially, the Monadnock chapter numbers had decreased, and trying to maintain leadership has become extremely difficult. Both executive committees felt that this merger was in the best interest of both chapters and unanimously agreed to move forward with the plan. Respective members of both chapters fully supported this initiative. The New Hampshire chapter will act as an umbrella for the Monadnock chapter. I had the pleasure of meeting both deans, Laura Belanger (New Hampshire) and Mary Ann Fleming (Monadnock), in Merrimack, N.H., for a pre-celebration.

### Register Now for Our Chapter Leader Town Hall Meeting on June 6 at 7:00 p.m. EDT



This town hall meeting is for both incoming and outgoing leadership. You will have the opportunity to network with chapter leaders in your region at virtual tables in our Airmeet social lounge and meet new AGO staff, members of the National Council, and new regional councillors. This is *your* opportunity to share any challenges you have been faced with, as well as some of your chapter's successes. We encourage you to ask lots of questions to get the answers you need!

Please use this link to register for the meeting: <https://www.airmeet.com/e/671fd360-cfd7-11ec-a553-d12ee4d070fe>. Once you register, you will receive a unique link that you will use to enter the event. Please put this link in your calendar so that it will be easily accessible. Instructions for how best to use Airmeet can be found here: <https://www.agohq.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Town-Hall-Meeting-and-How-to-Use-Airmeet.pdf>.



## Reminder: Update Your Officer Roster in ONCARD by June 30!

Realizing that you may not have a full list of new officers by June 30 and may have to push back your chapter elections, we ask that, if you have confirmed one officer for the new year of leadership, you please ask them to update their information, so that you will have an active officer in your chapter who can receive important communications from AGO Headquarters and have access to ONCARD.

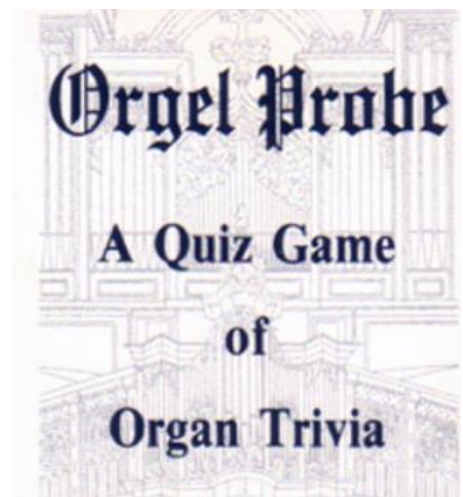
It is equally important that you retrieve your member roster from ONCARD each month to review the list of active members and those who have canceled. Phylcia Ross, manager of member engagement and chapter support, received an irate call from the son of a former member *who had died in 2017*. He was still receiving calls asking if his father could serve as a substitute organist for churches in the area. Please be vigilant about removing former members from your substitute lists.



## Programs in a Box

Each month, we will be providing you with ideas, tools, and resources that you can use for a monthly chapter program. We welcome suggestions for future programs in a box!

**Orgel Probe** tests your knowledge of the organ, its history, literature, and construction, and includes 530 questions related to the King of Instruments. It can be used for a Zoom meeting, or you can produce an in-person *Jeopardy* program, organizing the questions by category. It's fun, educational, and very interactive! The game is sold in our online store; however, we will send you deck of quiz cards for **free**. I am sure that there is someone in your chapter who would enjoy serving as your quiz show host. Please contact Phylcia Ross at [pross@agohq.org](mailto:pross@agohq.org) to request your deck of cards.





## Fox Valley (IL) Subsidy for Travel to AGO Conventions

Does your chapter have a policy in place regarding sending your chapter dean to attend AGO's conventions? I want to recognize the Fox Valley chapter for creating a travel policy for dean's attendance at national and regional conventions. "Both a dean and the chapter stand to benefit from a dean's involvement in conventions. For example, personal professional growth, networking with deans from other chapters, taking advantage of opportunities to meet performing artists, and to experience other organs first-hand, ought to enable our dean to bring to the chapter new ideas and a more informed sense of how our chapter contributes to AGO's mission and programs." I encourage to read full details of this policy, which can be found under Management and Governance in the Chapter Leadership Toolkits: <https://www.agohq.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Fox-Valley-Policy-Travel-Subsidy-for-AGO-Conventions.pdf>.

In closing, I want to thank the North Shore (IL) chapter for sharing this wonderful cartoon, which appeared in their May newsletter:

